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Abstract: Elusive and fraught with textual difficulties, Riddle 95, the 'last' of the Old English verse riddles preserved in the tenth-century Exeter Book, has long baffled modern readers as one of a handful of thorny items in the collection that have so far defied solution. 'Book' is the answer that has found most acceptance with critics in the past, yet the speaking subject of Riddle 95 is unlike anything described in those items of the collection that actually deal with writing and the tools of the monastic scriptorium. Rather, the linguistic and thematic parallels between Riddle 95 on the one hand, and the cosmological riddles and poems in the Exeter Book on the other, strongly suggest that the subject of Riddle 95 is the sun, a frequent topic of early medieval enigmatography. The poem obliquely relates how the rising sun installs itself in the sky to shed its welcome light upon the earth before it sets and vanishes from sight, completing its daily orbit along unknown paths. The main clues helping to secure the solution 'sun' are based upon what was known in Anglo-Saxon England about the solar course and the planetary motions, especially from the astronomical writings of Isidore of Seville and Bede. Further evidence is provided by several analogues in the Anglo-Latin riddle tradition, including the *Enigmata* of Aldhelm and his followers.

1 Introduction

In the nearly two centuries since their first modern edition (Thorpe 1842), the Old English *Riddles* uniquely preserved in the tenth-century Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3501) have generated a substantial body of research within Anglo-Saxon studies that sees a growing number of publications every year. Since the *Riddles* have come down to us without their answers in the manuscript, a great deal of scholarly inquiry has been devoted to offering, supporting and refuting old and new solutions, especially to those riddles whose subjects have eluded even the specialists. Riddle 95, the 'last' of the Exeter Book verse riddles and the

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final item of the codex in its extant form, provides a particularly intriguing case in point, having a long and contradictory history of solutions ranging from 'wandering singer', 'moon' and 'book' to 'prostitute' and 'ship', to name only a few.[1] This essay reviews these earlier proposals and offers the new solution 'sun' that – as I attempt to demonstrate – is sustained by the context of both the Exeter Book *Riddles* themselves and that of the wider Anglo-Saxon riddle tradition, in which cosmological phenomena constitute a staple subject matter. I shall first give my own reading and translation of Riddle 95 (Section 2) and discuss why the solutions put forward hitherto fail to fully account for the various clues given in the text (Sections 3–5), before detailing the evidence in support of the answer 'sun' (Sections 6–8).

2 Riddle 95: Text and Translation

The text of Riddle 95 occupies the lower half of folio 130v that concludes the Exeter Book codex in its present state. The final leaves of the manuscript are heavily damaged by a large diagonal burn that runs through much of the third group of the *Riddles* (fols. 124v–130v), leaving some items so mutilated that they are insoluble. The text of Riddle 95, however, is intact and complete, from its initial *I* (in *Ic*) at the start of a new paragraph to its end punctuation mark on the last ruled line at the bottom of the page:

Ic eom indryhten ond eorlum cuð,
ond reste oft ricum ond heanum,
folcum gefræge. Fereð wide
ond me fremdes ær freondum stondeð
hiþendra hyht, gif ic habban sceal
blæd in burgum oþþe beorhte god.
Nu snottre men swiþast lufiaþ
midwist mine; ic monigum sceal
wisdom cyþan, no þær word sprecan
ænig ofer eorðan. Þeah nu ælda bearn
londbuendra lastas mine
swiþe secað, ic swaþe hwilum
mine bemiþe monna gehwylcum.

(Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 243)

1 The numbering and text of the *Riddles* is that in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (Krapp and Dobbie 1936). For an overview of earlier solutions to Riddle 95, see Göbel (1980: 541–551) and Fry (1981: 26).

> 'I am noble and familiar to men, and often rest with the mighty and the lowly, famous among mankind. The hope of plunderers travels far and, someone else's before, stays friendlike with me, [5] if I shall possess prosperity in the strongholds or bright wealth. Now wise men especially love my presence; to many I shall reveal wisdom, and speak no word there, [10] not any upon earth. Although now the children of men, of land-dwellers, greatly seek my trails, I at times conceal my track from all humans'.[2]

As it stands in the manuscript, the text presents a number of linguistic cruxes that cannot be satisfactorily resolved without editorial intervention. While the opening and concluding parts are fairly straightforward and syntactically unambiguous, lines 3b–9 are less so. The main difficulties concern the manuscript readings of *fereð* (3b), *fremdes* (4a), *beorhtne god* (6b) and *sprecað* (9b), which most editors and commentators have attempted to emend in one way or other.[3] The above text of Riddle 95 leaves lines 3–4 unaltered but adopts two earlier emendations in lines 6b and 9b. The reasons for this are both grammatical and contextual and based on the following considerations:

- There is no need to emend *fereð* (3b) to *fere*, as Krapp and Dobbie (1936: 243) and others do. *Fereð* 'travels' is best understood as the predicate of *hiþendra hyht* 'the hope of plunderers' (5a) and as syntactically parallel to *stondeð* 'stands' (4b). In my reading of the unemended lines, the unspecified desirable thing that the 'plunderers' hope to get 'travels' and then 'stays' with the enigmatic speaker.
- I take the genitive *fremdes* (4a) as a substantivized form of *fremde* (adj.) in the sense of 'another (person), anyone else' (*DOE* s.v. *fremde* 3.c.ii), modifying the subject *hiþendra hyht* 'the hope of plunderers' (5a). The expression *fremdes ær* 'someone else's (possession) before' contrasts the former condition of the *hiþendra hyht* with its current state in the speaker's friendly company, as expressed by the adverbial dative *freondum* 'in the manner of friends, friendlike' (4b) in the complementing half-line. What previously belonged to someone else is now in the possession of the 'noble' speaker, bringing prosperity and wealth (6).
- Although the accusative singular masculine *beorhtne god* 'the bright God' (6b, with a short *ŏ*) is grammatical and retained by some, neuter *beorhte god* 'bright

2 Krapp and Dobbie (1936) print *fere* (3b) for MS *fereð*, while retaining the manuscript readings *beorhtne* (6b) and *sprecað* (9b); my emendations and punctuation. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

3 As Williamson (1977: 398) notes: "Any editor's solution depends in large part upon his reading of lines 3b–6". For a detailed discussion of the textual criticism of Riddle 95, see Göbel (1980: 538–606).

wealth' (with a long *ō*), first suggested by Grein (1858: 407), makes more sense, as will become clear in the discussion below (Section 7). The form *beorhtne* may be a scribal slip due to the frequency of the adjective in religious contexts and in similar collocations such as *beorhtne sunu* 'the bright Son' as in *Christ I*, 205 (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 5; see *DOE* s.v. *beorht* and *DOEC*). The *if*-clause names 'prosperity' and 'wealth' as the result of the friendly conjunction of the speaker and the desirable thing the plunderers hope to get.

– The emendation of *sprecað* (9b) to *sprecan*, as proposed by Williamson (1977: 121 and 401–402), is adopted here. It restores the double infinitive introduced by *sceal* (8b) and establishes the paradox of the speechless speaker, a familiar riddle trope. The erroneous *sprecað* could be explained as a reflex of the neighbouring plural verb forms *lufiaþ* (7b) and *secað* (12a). The speaking subject provides wisdom without speaking.

3 Earlier Solutions: 'Book'/'Writing'

The most widely accepted solution to Riddle 95 today is 'book', first advanced by Craig Williamson (1977: 397–402) in his edition of the *Riddles*, and further elaborated upon by Göbel (1980: 551–592, 'writing, holy text'), Pinsker and Ziegler (1985: 336–340, 'riddle book'), and Korhammer (2003, 'Holy Scriptures'). As Patrick Murphy notes, "in recent years […] consensus seems to be slowly emerging that Riddle 95 deals in some way with textuality and the technology of writing" (2011: 87). While some recent commentators, such as Clarke (2009: 62), Ramey (2013: 340), Salvador-Bello (2015: 433–435 and 521) and Dale (2017: 48), have endorsed the 'book' solution without reassessing the evidence, Murphy (2011: 86–91), who himself favours 'book', not only carefully examines the more obscure passages of the text, but also addresses Erika von Erhardt-Siebold's suggestion 'quill pen' (1947), the earliest attempt to interpret the poem as a scribal or chirographic riddle.

What the various 'book' and 'writing' solutions have in common is that they hinge on the verbal parallels between the conclusion of Riddle 95 and the opening lines of the 'quill pen' Riddle 51. The latter depicts the act of writing as a metaphorical journey of the pen and the three fingers holding it, which together leave inky 'trails' (*lastas*) and 'tracks' (*swaþu*) across the parchment sheet (1–3a), an image adopted from the earlier Anglo-Latin *enigmata*:

> Ic seah wrætlice wuhte feower
> samed siþian; swearte wæran lastas,
> swaþu swiþe blacu.
>
> (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 206)

> 'I saw four wondrous creatures travelling together; swarthy were [their] trails, very black tracks'.

The same terms (*lastas […] swaþe*) are used in Riddle 95 for the speaker's movements that humans are unable to follow (10b–13), but here they cannot refer to writing. Writing does not 'conceal' (*bemiþe*) itself from the readers but is always there and physically present on the page, even if the text may be cryptic and its sense hidden. Reading and writing in Anglo-Saxon times was primarily a monastic pursuit of a minority of the populace and not a matter of the people in general, referred to in these lines collectively as the 'children of men' (*ælda bearn*, 10b), 'land-dwellers' (*londbuendra*, 11a) and 'humans' (*monna*, 13b). The threefold terminology artfully varies the equally inclusive 'men' (*eorlum*, 1b), 'the mighty and the lowly' (*ricum ond heanum*, 2b) and the 'mankind' (*folcum*, 3a) of the opening lines (1–3) to frame the text's clinching clue: although familiar and visible to everyone, the enigmatic subject sometimes hides itself from us.

An argument for the 'book' solution has further been made from what Ramey identifies as the 'speaking-wisdom motif' and the 'wordless speech trope' (2013: 340). Ramey cites the 'Bible' Riddle 26 and the more equivocal Riddle 67, whose subject some commentators take to be a religious book, too. While in the first of these, the personified Bible promises to make its readers 'wiser' (*frodran*, 21), it is impossible to tell where the isolated dative singular *wisdome* 'wisdom' in the mutilated lines of Riddle 67 syntactically belongs to. From what remains decipherable of its defective text, it seems that the precious object which solemnly addresses a Christian congregation at mass is a liturgical cross (the subject of Riddle 55) rather than a book, similar to the dumb yet speaking sacramental vessels of Riddles 48 and 59. The same silent speech trope is also used in Riddles 28 and 60, which describe the making of a codex and a reed pen, respectively, as well as in some Anglo-Latin scribal riddles.[4] Yet as Nelson (1978) has shown, the paradox is by no means restricted to riddles dealing with items of the scriptorium, since basically all riddles of the 'I am'-type deploying prosopopoeia feature it. In Riddle 95, too, there is a personified speaker, but while the inanimate, mouth- and tongueless objects in Riddles 28, 48, 59, 60, 67 begin to speak and utter words, this is not the case with the subject of Riddle 95, which is more vaguely said to 'reveal wisdom' (*wisdom cyþan*, 9a) *without* speaking.

Supporters of the 'book/writing' solution disagree about how to construe lines 3b–9, and readings vary according not only to the extent of editorial inter-

4 Aldhelm, Enigma 30, "Elementum" ('alphabet'); Eusebius, Enigma 7, "De littera" ('letters') and 32, "De membrano" ('parchment').

vention but also to one's understanding of the half-line *hiþendra hyht* (5a), literally the 'hope/expectation/prospect' of 'plunderers' (*DOE* s.vv. *hiþan*, *hyht*). For Erhardt-Siebold (1947: 559), the expression is a kenning for ink, whereas others believe it refers to gold used in medieval codices (Williamson 1977: 398–401), to parchment (Göbel 1980: 564–566), or to a quill (Murphy 2011: 90). All four interpretations entail a number of strained readings of the lines in questions, neither of which is convincing, despite the authors' references to those riddles in the collection that actually deal with writing and book-making and to their Anglo-Latin analogues. To back her proposition 'quill pen', Erhardt-Siebold quotes the 'inkhorn' Riddle 93, in which the scribe's pen is envisioned as a *hiþende feond* 'plundering foe' (28b; Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 242) dipping into the horn filled with ink, while Williamson, Göbel and Murphy refer to the gold embellishments, the parchment-making, and the writing act implied in Riddles 26 ('Bible') and 51 ('quill pen'). However, Riddle 95 has nothing of the physicality and materiality of the Old English scribal riddles – the two books (nos. 26 and 28), the reed and quill pen (nos. 51 and 60), and the two inkhorns (nos. 88 and 93) – all of which are transformation riddles describing at their core an often cruel metamorphosis of a living being (nos. 26, 28, 51, 88 and 93) or a plant (no. 60) into a lifeless object of the medieval scriptorium. What some associate with aspects of the 'technology' of writing (Clarke 2009: 62; Murphy 2011: 87; Ramey 2013: 340) is indeed entirely missing in Riddle 95. Rather, it is precisely the strange *im*materiality and *in*tangibility of the enigmatic subject that is foregrounded in the text – a fact that seems to have led Morley (1888: 226), Trautmann (1912: 132; 1915: 139–141) and Holthausen (1925: 220) to their unlikely – and unsubstantiated – proposals 'Word of God', 'spirit' and 'thought', respectively. Trautmann's 'spirit' was a revision of his earlier solution 'riddle' (1883: 168–169; 1894: 51; 1905: 206–211), which in turn was derived from Franz Dietrich's 'wandering singer' (1859: 488), the earliest attempt to solve Riddle 95, made more than a century and half ago.[5]

4 The Myth of the Cynewulfian Colophon

While today Dietrich's solution 'wandering singer' ("der fahrende sänger") appears romantic and Wagnerian, several early scholars – notably Prehn (1883: 4–5), Hicketier (1888: 590) and Nuck (1888: 393) – followed his reasoning since it was based on the then dominant view that the *Riddles* were composed by Cyne-

5 Fry (1981: 26), Poole (1998: 275) and others erroneously list 'soul' as another of Trautmann's solutions.

wulf, who was thought to have been an itinerant minstrel. The Anglo-Saxon poet's name, Dietrich and his contemporaries believed, was encrypted in the text of "Wulf and Eadwacer", the poem immediately preceding the first batch of the *Riddles* in the Exeter Book, which since Thorpe (1842: 380) had been printed as the 'first riddle' of the collection. Cynewulf's authorship was further detected in the mysterious 'wolf' (*lupus*) of the Latin Riddle 90, while in the concluding Riddle 95, it was held, Cynewulf would reflect on his noble vocation as a poet. Stopford Brooke's comment in his *History of Early English Literature* (1892) is a typical example of late-Victorian medievalism and feudalistic sentiment. In the last of the Exeter *Riddles*, Brooke writes, Cynewulf "sketches [...] his own position and temperament, and with that, the position and temperament of the Scôp", whom the text portrays as receiving gifts from plundering warriors for his 'songs of wisdom', before he would "hide himself in solitude, musing [...] on new poems" (1892: 8). The idea that the *Riddles*, although patchy and fragmentary, should be elegantly framed by a prologue and an epilogue in which the poet makes oblique reference to his name and art, was an attractive one. Even after "Wulf and Eadwacer" had been excluded from the *Riddles* and the thesis of the Cynewulfian authorship had been discredited, Riddle 95 continued to be considered as some kind of poetic envoi and "monkish colophon to the collection" (Wyatt 1912: 122). Quoting Crossley-Holland's remark that it "would be pleasant to think the poet or poets who composed the Exeter Book riddle collection rounded it off with a riddle about a riddle" (1979: 139), Pinsker and Ziegler in their edition of the *Riddles*, for instance, espouse the idea of a 'colophon' and solve Riddle 95 as 'riddle book' (1985: 336–337), combining as it were Trautmann's 'riddle' with Williamson's 'book'. Similar considerations are behind Borysławski's solution *giedd*, the Old English term the author translates as 'riddle', 'composition' and 'wisdom' (2004: 169).

Other critics, too, have clung to the notion of the riddler's 'valediction' (Davis 1992: 146), 'finale' (Korhammer 2003: 77) or 'coda' (Salvador-Bello 2015: 435), although Pope (1974: 617; 1978: 29–30) and Conner (1993: 108–111) have persuasively demonstrated that in all probability the last quire of the Exeter Book once contained at least one, perhaps two more leaves following its now final folio 130. The loss may be due to the fire damage that affected the last two gatherings, so that "the complete destruction of two outer leaves is certainly possible", as Conner (1993: 108) surmises. The likelihood of missing leaves following those of the remaining riddles is further suggested by the fact that folio 130v is not concluded by an *explicit* or any other "formula to assure us that the book is complete"; hence there is "no way to tell whether Riddle 95 was originally the last text" (Pope 1978: 29; 1974: 617). We have, of course, no means of knowing what exactly – if anything – was lost before the codex was foliated and rebound in early modern times. Still, it is safer to think of Riddle 95 not as the closing item of the original collec-

tion; its text just happens to fill the page, in the same way the lines of Riddles 14, 74, and 80 were written out so that they neatly end at the bottom of folios 104r, 126v, and 127r, respectively.[6]

5 Earlier Solutions: 'Prostitute' and 'Ship'

In many ways, the various 'book' and 'writing' solutions hark back to the nostalgic nineteenth-century readings that sought to interpret Riddle 95 as a graceful self-referential finale of the riddling *scop* taking a bow to his audience.[7] Yet not all commentators have followed the misty paths of Dietrich's minstrel. Frederick Tupper's solution 'moon' (1906: 104–105; 1910: 239–240), discussed below (Section 6), is an early exception, and so are Kevin Kiernan's 'prostitute' (1975) and – most recently – Karl Persson's 'ship' (2014). There is something very nineteen-seventies about Kiernan's attempt to read Riddle 95 as an obscene or sexual riddle dealing with a promiscuous woman whose "success depends on prudent men and on total secrecy", seeking "her joy and her god in this world" (1975: 388). Apart from its androcentric perspective, the obvious weakness of this interpretation is that it completely disregards the linguistic context and generic conventions of the *Riddles*, and instead is based on a highly idiosyncratic – and indeed wrong – understanding of the Old English text. In the opening verse, for instance, Kiernan (1975: 385) renders *eorlum cuð* as 'intimate with men' to fit his solution, but here the expression means 'well-known/familiar to men' in the sense of 'generally known', as in the analogous collocations *eallum cuð* and *ældum cuþ* in Riddles 29 (8a) and 33 (11b), respectively (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 195 and 197; see *DOE* s.v. *cunnan* VIII). Kiernan's other misguided readings include 'in bed' for *reste* (2b), 'disreputable' for *gefræge* (3a), 'observances' for *lastas* (11b), and 'bandage' for *swaþe* (12b), understood as the sanitary towels with which the menstruous speaker hides herself "for a while from each man" (1975: 385–387). Not surprisingly, critics have either rejected or, more often, ignored Kiernan's solution. Riddles about professions may be rare, as Williamson (1977: 399) has commented – the 'one-eyed garlic-seller' of Riddle 86 is a notable exception – but more problematic is the fact that even if we accept the answer 'prostitute', there is no *double entendre* in Riddle 95. The erotic riddles in the Exeter Book, such as the 'onion' (no. 25), 'key' (no. 44), 'churn' (no. 54), 'helmet' (no. 61), 'spur' (no. 62) and 'glass

6 The same must be true for the text immediately preceding Riddle 21 (perhaps the conclusion of Riddle 20) on the now lost leaf between folios 105 and 106.

7 See also Stanley's caveat: "Perhaps it is natural for a bookish reader to wish that the collection should be rounded off with a riddle on riddling" (1995: 200).

beaker' (no. 63), are catch-riddles in so far as they typically suggest a double solution, operating with an obscene referent alongside an actual (decent) referent. As Persson (2014: 232) notes, "the solution 'prostitute' contradicts everything we otherwise encounter in bawdy riddles; rather than pointing to an innocent answer via descriptions that sound morally suspect, this riddle, in Kiernan's reading, alludes to a scandalous answer via apparently innocent means".

Persson's own study of Riddle 95 is a welcome move away from the deadlocks of the debate and its persistent myths, even though his arguments for the new answer 'ship' (OE *scip*) are less compelling than his critique of some of the older proposals, especially the 'book/writing' group. In a volume of essays about *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons* (2014), the link between the 'plunderers' of the *hiþendra hyht* (5a) and a ship may seem plausible at first sight, but the reader is left with the feeling that there is simply not enough in the text of Riddle 95 that – directly and indirectly – points to a ship. While it is true that boats leave no lasting trails (*lastas*, 11b) in their wake, it is doubtful that the riddle's concluding lines refer to "the act of watching ships", which in the Persson's view are eagerly sought after by the coastal population as "important instrument[s] for spreading cultural wisdom" (2014: 236–237). There is a further incongruousness in the idea that the text depicts the speaking ship as 'a unifying figure' (with reference to the *ricum ond heanum*, 2b) and at the same time as a status symbol of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy (*eorlum cuð*, 1b, translated as 'familiar to earls'; 2014: 235). To substantiate his case, Persson cites the ubiquitous ships and seafarers of Old English poetry and adduces the little-known Riddle 32. Yet, the latter's single-footed subject with its mouth and 'many ribs' that travels over the plains to transport loads of food is a spoked wheel and not a vessel. For more immediate points of comparison, one might rather turn to the – uncontroversial – ships of the two runic Riddles 19 and 64. In both instances, however, the nautical subject is fashioned as a powerful 'sea-horse' through a set of metaphors for the very elements that constitute our notion of a ship at sea, from the mast and the sail to the nailed planks and the sailor – all of which are absent in Riddle 95. It is important to realize that the Exeter Book *Riddles*, as a rule, follow generic conventions by turning on the defining features, characteristics and habits of the object, phenomenon or animal they obliquely describe, such as the intoxicating effect of wine (Riddle 11), the devastating forces of a storm (Riddles 1–3), or the warbling song of the nightingale (Riddle 8), and so on. If its subject was a ship, Riddle 95 would be an uncharacteristically poor riddle indeed.

6 Tupper's 'Moon' and the Cosmology of Riddle 29

Tupper's 'moon', proposed more than a century ago, is a far better solution to Riddle 95, even though it has been accepted only tentatively by some commentators, including Mackie (1934: 242), Jember (1976: 57) and Niles (2006: 144). Unimpressed by the fanciful theories of his German colleagues, Tupper interpreted the riddle not as a poetic colophon but on the basis of its striking linguistic and thematic parallels to the Exeter 'moon and sun' Riddle 29. In its condensed drama of conquest, raid and expulsion, the personified moon and sun compete for the dominion over the celestial spheres with their luminous planets and stars. The latter are three times referred to as the 'plunder' (*huþe*, 2b, 4a and 9a) which is first carried home by the crescent or 'horned' moon (1–6) and then recaptured by the rising sun (7–9a). Driving the moon into exile, the sun establishes itself in the sky before moving west to eventually vanish from sight (9b–14). The complete text of Riddle 29 reads:

Ic wiht geseah wundorlice
hornum bitweonum huþe lædan,
lyftfæt leohtlic, listum gegierwed,
huþe to þam ham of þam heresiþe;
walde hyre on þære byrig bur atimbran,
searwum asettan, gif hit swa meahte.
Ða cwom wundorlicu wiht ofer wealles hrof,
seo is eallum cuð eorðbuendum,
ahredde þa þa huþe ond to ham bedraf
wreccan ofer willan, gewat hyre west þonan
fæhþum feran, forð onetteð.
Dust stonc to heofonum, deaw feol on eorþan,
niht forð gewat. Nænig siþþan
wera gewiste þære wihte sið.

(Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 195)[8]

'I saw a wondrous creature carry plunder between [its] horns, a bright air-vessel, artfully adorned, plunder [carried] home from the war-journey; [5] it wanted to build for itself a chamber in the stronghold, set it up skilfully, if it could do so. Then a wondrous creature came over the top of the wall, familiar to all earth-dwellers; it recaptured then the plunder and drove [10] the exile home against its will, passed westwards thence to travel vengefully – it hastens forth. Dust rose to the heavens, dew fell on the earth, the night passed away. No man knew that creature's journey thereafter'.

8 Krapp and Dobbie print *onette* (11b) for MS *onetteð*, which is retained here.

The unique effect of Riddle 29 is achieved through a string of doublings and iterations related to the twin protagonists. The 'wondrous creature' (*wiht [...] wundorlice*, 1) of the first line is duplicated in the chiastic *wundorlicu wiht* in line 7a, mirroring the opposition of moon and sun as a cosmic pair. Analogously, the major metaphors of the contested 'plunder', the precarious 'home' and the heavenly 'journey' (*huþe*, 2b and 4a; *to [...] ham*, 4a; *heresiþe*, 4b) of the opening passage are all reiterated in the poem's second half (*huþe*, 9a; *to ham*, 9b; *sið*, 14b). Further verbal echoes, such as *walde [...] willan* (5a and 10b), *eorðbuendum [...] eorþan* (8b and 12b) and *gewat [...] gewat* (10b and 13a), extend the puzzling play of doubles. Yet the term that stands out is the triple 'plunder' (*huþe [...] huþe [...] huþe*, 2b, 4a and 9a). For Tupper (1910: 139), it is the light the moon has captured from the absent sun, and that the latter snatches back at dawn, while Williamson (1977: 227–228) believes that what the poet had in mind is the moon's earthshine, that is "the earthlit dark portion of the moon cradled by the crescent light".

Tupper and Williamson quote from Ælfric's *De temporibus anni* (I.31–32) to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons already knew that the moon reflects the light from the sun rather than generating its own light. However, the same passage in Ælfric's computistic manual also talks about the stars, which, too, were held to receive their light from the sun:

> Soðlice se mona 7 ealle steorran underfoð leoht of ðære micclan sunnan, 7 heora nan næfð nænne leoman buton of ðære sunnan leoman. 7 ðeah ðe seo sunne under eorðan on nihtlicere tide scine, þeah astihð hire leoht on sumere sidan þære eorðan þe ða steorran bufon us onliht, 7 ðonne heo upagæð heo oferswið ealra ðæra steorrena, 7 eac þæs monan leoht, mid hire ormætan leohte.
>
> 'The moon and all the stars receive light from the great sun, and none of them has any radiance apart from the radiance of the sun. And whilst the sun may shine below the earth at night-time, nevertheless its light ascends on one side of the earth and illuminates the stars above us, and when it rises it overpowers the light of all the stars, and even the moon, with its own intense light' (Blake 2009: 78–79).

Ælfric's sources for this are Isidore of Seville's *De natura rerum* ('On the Nature of Things') and Bede's treatise of the same title, together with the latter's computistic *De temporum ratione* ('On the Reckoning of Time'), all of which were well-known in Anglo-Saxon England.[9] Isidore's much fuller explanation of the nature of the starlight reads (*De natura rerum* 24.1):

9 Isidore, *De natura rerum* 24.1 (ed. Fontaine 1960: 261); Bede, *De natura rerum* 11 and *De temporum ratione* 6 (ed. Jones 1975–1980: 201–202 and 292). For the proliferation of these works in pre-Conquest England, see Lapidge (2006: 310) and Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: 896–897 and 916).

> Stellas non habere proprium lumen, sed a sole inluminari dicuntur, nec eas umquam de caelo abscedere, sed ueniente sole celari. Omnia enim sidera obscurantur sole oriente, non cadunt. Nam dum sol ortus sui signa praemiserit, omnes stellarum ignes sub eius luminis fulgore euanescunt, ita ut praeter solis ignem nullius sideris splendor uideatur. Hinc etiam et sol appellatus, eo quod solus appareat obscuratis cunctis sideribus. Nec mirum hoc de sole, cum etiam plena luna et tota nocte fulgente pleraque astra non luceant. Esse autem etiam per diem stellas in caelo probat solis deliquium, quod, quando sol obiecto orbe lunae fuerit obscuratus, clariora in caelo astra uideantur. (Fontaine 1960: 261)

> 'They say that stars do not have their own light, but are illuminated by the sun, and that they never depart from the heavens, but are hidden by the coming of the sun. All the stars are obscured by the rising sun; they do not fall. For as soon as the sun has sent ahead the signs of its rising, all the fires of the stars disappear beneath the brilliance of its light, so that aside from the fire of the sun no star's splendour may be seen. This is also the reason it is called the sun [*sol*] because, when all the stars are obscured, it appears alone [*solus*]. Nor is this fact about the sun astonishing, since when the moon is full and gleams throughout the night it is also the case that many stars do not shine. Moreover, the eclipse of the sun proves that the stars are in the heavens during the day, because, when the sun has been obscured by the interposed orb of the moon, the stars are seen very clearly in the heavens' (Kendall and Wallis 2016: 150).[10]

It makes more sense, therefore, to take the 'plunder' of Riddle 29 not as the moonlight but as the stars that continuously shine in the heavens with reflected sunlight. In the Ptolemaic model of the cosmos prevalent in the early Middle Ages, the heavenly bodies circle along eight spheres nested around the stationary earth at the centre of the universe: the inner seven spheres, it was thought, bear the 'wandering stars' or planets – the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn – beyond which there are the 'fixed stars' in the outermost sphere of the firmament.[11] In the text of Riddle 29, the stars first appear between the 'horns' of the crescent moon that reigns in the night sky (1–6), before the rising sun eclipses or – in Ælfric's words – 'overpowers' their light, claiming the astral plunder for itself and banishing its lunar adversary to paths unknown to humans (7–14). Drawing on the language of heroic poetry, the riddle imagines the visible sky

10 Following Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* and Jerome's *Commentaria in Isaiam* (see Kendall and Wallis 2016: 150 and 224–225). Compare Isidore, *Etymologiae* 3.61–62 (trans. Barney et al. 2006: 103): "Stars are said not to possess their own light, but to be illuminated by the sun [...]. They do not set during the day, but they are obscured by the brightness of the sun". For the 'two-horned' moon, see Isidore, *De natura rerum* 18.7, and *Etymologiae* 3.54.1.

11 Compare Isidore, *De natura rerum* 13, 22 and 23, including a diagram ('rota') of the planetary spheres; and *Etymologiae* 62–71; Bede, *De natura rerum* 11–14, excerpting Isidore and Pliny's *Natural history* (see Kendall and Wallis 2010: 80–82). A useful overview of early-medieval cosmology and astronomy is provided by Eastwood (2013); for Anglo-Saxon England, see Guenther Discenza (2011) and Anlezark (2013: 66–70).

as a 'stronghold' (*byrig*, 5a) ruled alternately by two rivalling warlords – the looting moon by night and the avenging sun by day – restlessly engaged in their struggle over the heavens.

7 The Sun: The Travelling Star of Riddle 95

According to Tupper, there are three motives that Riddle 29 shares with Riddle 95: "the fame of the subject among earth-dwellers, its capture of booty in its proud hour, and its later disappearance from the sight of men" (1910: 139 and 239). While it is true that both texts feature the unconventional trope of the 'plunder' and conclude with a reference to the subject's invisible journey, the 'fame' in Riddle 29 does not belong to the moon but to the sun. It is the rising and usurping sun rather than the moon which is said to be 'familiar to all earth-dwellers' (*eallum cuð eorðbuendum*, 8), just as the subject of Riddle 95 is 'familiar to men' (*eorlum cuð*, 1b) and sought after by the 'the children of men, of land-dwellers' (*ælda bearn londbuendra*, 10b–11a). In his commentary to Riddle 95, Tupper (1910: 239–240) correctly interprets the *hiþendra hyht* (5a) as "a circumlocution of *huþ*", the 'plunder' of Riddle 29, and reads *burgum* (95.6a) as an echo of *byrig* ('stronghold', 29.5a), a term also used in *Christ II*, 519 in the Exeter Book for the Heavenly Jerusalem.[12] In both riddles, the enigmatic looters appear in their 'stronghold(s)' before they ultimately depart from sight. Tupper (1910: 240) understands lines 7–10a of Riddle 95 as a reference to the Anglo-Saxon's interest in the moon as a "source of 'wisdom' or scientific knowledge", especially for the computus of Easter; yet this only insufficiently explains why 'wise men' (*snottre men*, 7a) should enjoy the moon's 'company' (*midwist*, 8a), and how one can gain 'wisdom' (*wisdom*, 9a) from its nocturnal presence 'upon earth' (*ofer eorðan*, 10a). Indeed, the day rather than the night was traditionally seen as a time of wisdom and knowledge: "In a prophetic sense", Isidore writes in his *De natura rerum* (1.3), "day signifies knowledge of the divine Law, and night the blindness of ignorance" (Kendall and Wallis 2016: 113).[13]

Tupper's reading of Riddle 95 as a cosmological piece has much to commend it, but the details of its evocative narrative tally less with the solution 'moon' than

12 *Christ II*, 519 (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 17): *to þære beorhtan byrg* 'to that bright city'. Compare *Christ II*, 530 (*ibid.*): *blis in burgum* 'bliss in the cities'; and *Old English Boethius*, Meter 5,3 (Irvine and Godden 2012: 28–29): *æfter burgum beortost scinet* '[the sun and the stars] shine very brightly across towns'.

13 Isidore, *De natura rerum* 1.3 (ed. Fontaine 1960: 177): *Prophetice autem dies scientiam divinae legis significat, nox vero ignorantiae caecitatem*. Compare Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 7.

with those characteristics that the Anglo-Saxon riddle tradition typically associates with the sun. Within the Exeter collection, the riddle underscores an interest in the motions of the celestial luminaries that not only informs the 'moon and sun' Riddle 29, but also Riddles 22 and 6, universally solved as 'Charles's Wain' and 'sun', respectively.[14] In Riddle 6, the solar course is described in terms of a ravaging war waged on earth by the sun, whose scorching heat is only lessened during the cooler seasons and at night:

Mec gesette soð sigora waldend
Crist to compe. Oft ic cwice bærne,
unrimu cyn eorþan getenge,
næte mid niþe, swa ic him no hrine,
þonne mec min frea feohtan hateþ.
Hwilum ic monigra mod arete,
hwilum ic frefre þa ic ær winne on
feorran swiþe; hi þæs felað þeah,
swylce þæs oþres, þonne ic eft hyra
ofer deop gedreag drohtað bete.
(Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 184)

'The true ruler of victories, Christ, set me in battle. I often burn the living, countless species upon earth, afflict (them) with trouble, although I do not touch them at all, [5] when my lord commands me to fight. Sometimes I gladden the minds of many, sometimes I comfort those I first fiercely combat from afar; yet they feel that as much as the other, when I again better their condition above the deep tumult'.

Riddle 6 effectively conjoins the biblical image of the eschatological 'sun of righteousness' (Mal. 4.2) with early medieval geocentric theories of the sun's daily orbit around the spherical earth. As seen from the earth, the westward travelling sun appears to set into the ocean that surrounds the inhabited world, only to re-emerge at dawn by 'unknown paths', as Isidore of Seville puts it in his *Etymologies* (3.52):

Sol oriens per meridiem iter habet. Qui postquam ad occasum venerit et Oceano se tinxerit, per incognitas sub terra vias vadit et rursus ad orientem recurrit (Lindsay 1911).

'The sun, when it rises, holds a path through the south. Afterward, it goes to the west and plunges itself into the Ocean, and it travels unknown paths under the earth, and once again runs back to the east' (Barney et al. 2006: 102).[15]

14 For a recent review of this cosmological group, see Neville (2016).

15 Compare Isidore, *Etymologiae* 3.51.1 and 5.31.3 and *De natura rerum* 17.2 (ed. Fontaine 1960: 233; trans. Kendal and Wallis 2016: 139): *Qui postquam ardemtem rotam Oceano tinxerit, per incognitas nobis vias ad locum unde exierat regreditur, expletoque noctis circulo, rursus de loco suo festinus*

For the Anglo-Saxons living on the western fringe of the known world, the sun's nightly disappearance in the ocean was both an observable reality and a powerful poetic conceit. As such it is strikingly deployed in the Old English *The Order of the World*, one of several poems preserved in the Exeter Book, whose metaphorical imagery and oblique diction are akin to the rhetoric of the *Riddles*. In the cosmological middle section of *The Order of the World* (37–81), the poet extols God's creation of the universe and expounds on how the rising sun, the 'light brightness' (*leohte beorht*, 59), brings joy to all earthly creatures before it wanders westwards to apparently sink into the watery abyss, imparting its splendour to the invisible regions 'beyond the sea' (73b–81):

Heofontorht swegl
scir gescyndeð in gesceaft godes
under foldan fæþm, farende tungol.
Forþon nænig fira þæs frod leofað
þæt his mæge æspringe þurh his ægne sped witan,
hu geond grund færeð goldtorht sunne
in þæt wonne genip under wætra geþring,
oþþe hwa þes leohtes londbuende
brucan mote, siþþan heo ofer brim hweorfeð.

(Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 165–166)

'The heaven-bright clear radiance [i.e. the sun] hastens by God's decree beneath the earth's embrace, a travelling star. Therefore, no man lives who is so wise that he may, by his own power, know its source, how the gold-bright sun fares across the abyss into the dark mist beneath the throng of waters, or what land-dwellers may enjoy that light once it passes beyond the sea'.

A matching account of the journeying sun occurs in *The Phoenix* (also from the Exeter Book) – only this time the poet relates not how the sun sets into the ocean, but how it emerges from it at dawn, keenly awaited by the mythical bird. The rising sun, re-emerging from the ocean's abyss, as it were, is praised as 'the noblest of stars', 'God's candle' and 'a glorious sign of God'; dispelling the darkness of the night, it drowns out the light of the stars as they depart westwards (90–99a):

Se sceal þære sunnan sið behealdan
ond ongean cuman Godes condelle,

erumpit 'After dipping its burning wheel in the ocean, [the sun] returns by ways unknown to us to the place from which it had emerged, and, with the completion of the night's revolution, it quickly bursts out again from its place'. For the idea of the world ocean, see Isidore, *Etymologiae* 13.15.1 and 14.2.1.

glædum gimme, georne bewitigan
hwonne up cyme æþelast tungla,
ofer yðmere estan lixan,
Fæder fyrngeweorc, frætwum blican,
torht tacen Godes. Tungol beoþ ahyded,
gewiten under waþeman westdælas on,
bideglad on dægred, ond seo deorce niht
won gewiteð.

(Blake 1990: 51)

'[The phoenix] must observe the journey of the sun, go forth to meet God's candle, a brilliant jewel, and keep watch eagerly for the time when the noblest of stars rises above the wavy sea, glowing in the east, the ancient work of the Father, a glorious sign of God, shimmering in its ornaments. The stars become hidden, departed beneath the waves in regions to the west, cloaked at the dawn, and the dim, dark night journeys away' (Jones 2012: 25).

The idea that the sun's revolution around the earth can only be observed by day, while its journey beneath the world ocean at night remains forever unfathomable, is precisely what is expressed in the final lines of Riddle 95. The 'earth-dwellers' (*eorðbuendum*, 8b) and 'land-dwellers' (*londbuende*, 80b) of Riddle 29 and *The Order of the World*, respectively, reappear in Riddle 95 as the 'children of land-dwellers' (*ælda [...] londbuendra*, 10b–11a), who in vain look out for the path that the revolving sun conceals from them at night (10b–13). The gnomic conclusion completes the sequence of clues which – in the light of the linguistic and thematic parallels provided by Riddles 6 and 29 and the cosmological passages in *The Order of the World* and *The Phoenix* – secure 'sun' as the most likely solution to Riddle 95:

– Lines 1–3a refer to the fact that the sun is well-known and omnipresent on earth: 'familiar to men' (*eorlum cuð*, 1b) and 'familiar to all' (*eallum cuð*, Riddle 29.8a), the majestic sun looks 'upon all things' (Ecclesiasticus 42.16) to equally shed its comforting light on everyone (Riddle 6.6–8a), resting with both 'the mighty and the lowly' (*ricum ond heanum*, 2b). That the speaking subject introduces itself as 'noble' (*indryhten*, 1a) is consonant with passages in Old English poetry that refer to the sun as God's 'noble creation' (*æþele gesceaft*), 'noble/splendid light' (*æðele leoht*), 'noble radiance' (*æþela glæm*) and 'the joy of noble stars' (*æþeltungla wyn*). Being the 'greater' of the two lights set by God in the firmament (Genesis 1.16), the sun excels the moon and is 'the noblest of stars' (*æþelast tungla*), as in the passage of *The Phoenix* quoted above.[16]

16 *DOE* s.v. *æþele*, 3.a and s.v. *æþeltungol*. The passages are: *Battle of Brunnanburh*, 16 (Dobbie 1942: 17): *æþele gesceaft*; *Paris Psalter*, 148.3 (Krapp 1932: 148): *æðele leoht*; *Christ II*, 607 (Krapp and

– Lines 3b–6 describe how the rising sun eclipses all other luminaries and installs itself in the sky. The sun usurps the 'stronghold(s)' of the firmament (*burgum*, 6a; *byrig*, Riddle 29.5a) from the disappearing moon, whose starry plunder (*hiþendra hyht*, 5a; *huþe*, Riddle 29.9a) it captures to establish its own dominion and to increase the splendour of its heavenly residence referred to as *blæd* 'prosperity' (6a) and *beorhte god* 'bright wealth' (6b). The 'plunderers' (*hiþendra*, 5a) are the moon and the sun that hold sway over the heavens – the moon at night, and the sun by day – and their plunder are the stars and planets that are said to 'travel' because they move unceasingly in their proper orbits. Claimed by the moon during the night, the stars are 'someone else's before' (*fremdes ær*, 4a) until they are 'concealed at the dawn' (*bideglad on dægred*, *The Phoenix*, 98a) by the rising sun, in whose company they temporarily stay 'like friends' (*freondum*, 4b).
– Lines 7–10a concern the usefulness of the sunlight to mankind and the day as a time of knowledge and learning, especially for those engaged in intellectual work which cannot be done at night: 'wise men' (*snottre men*, 7a) above all value the presence of the sun (7–8a), because the pursuit of 'wisdom' (*wisdom*, 9a) and book-learning is undertaken by daylight rather than in darkness. Although speechless (9b) and lacking the sense of touch (Riddle 6.4b) because it is non-human, the sun thus enables the proliferation of knowledge to many people (*monigum*, 8b; *monigra*, Riddle 6.6a). In Anglo-Saxon England, as elsewhere in early medieval Europe, 'wisdom' was inextricably linked with the daily hours of work in the monastic scriptorium, such as the preparation of parchment, the handling of pen and inkhorn and the binding of books, all of which are the subjects of a whole group of riddles in the Exeter Book. One of them, the fragmentary second 'inkhorn' riddle (Riddle 93), preserved on the same manuscript page as Riddle 95, not only refers to the quill pen as a 'plundering foe' (*hiþende feond*) collecting ink from the horn, but also concludes with a reference to the sun (*sunne*), metaphorically referred to as the mighty 'day-candle' (*dægcondel*), in whose light the scribe conducts his work (Riddle 93.28–33; Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 242).
– Lines 10b–13 deal with the perpetual orbit of the 'travelling star' (*farende tungol*, *Order of the World*, 75b), whose nocturnal path is a mystery to mortals, as already noted. Non-human and silent yet humanized and speaking through the riddle, the sun is both present and absent. Its identity is ultimately re-

Dobbie 1936: 20) and *Phoenix*, 93 (Blake 1990: 51): *æþelast tungla*; *Guthlac B*, 1278 (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 85): *æþela glæm*; *Phoenix*, 290 (Blake 1990: 56): *æþeltungla wyn*. Note that *Christ II*, *Guthlac B* and *The Phoenix* all survive in the Exeter Book.

vealed to those who are able to unravel the riddle's baffling knot of meanings despite their ignorance about the speaker's nightly ramblings 'across the abyss' (*geond grund*, *Order of the World*, 78a) and into the 'deep tumult' (*deop gedreag*, Riddle 6.10a) of divine creation and human understanding.

8 Analogues among the Latin *Enigmata*

The themes of Exeter Book Riddle 95 have a number of striking analogues among the early medieval *enigmata* in Latin that elucidate and sustain the solution 'sun'. Astronomy and cosmology are featured regularly both in the prose dialogues of the *Joca monachorum* tradition and in the surviving collections of metrical riddles, notably the anonymous seventh-century *Berne Riddles* and the Anglo-Latin *Enigmata* of Aldhelm of Malmesbury (d. 709/710) and his followers Tatwine (d. 734) and Eusebius (eighth century). In the 63 hexastichic *Berne Riddles*, the astronomical subjects are the sun (twice), the moon (twice), the sky, and the stars.[17] Cosmology is featured extensively in Aldhelm's one hundred *Enigmata*, covering the earth, the moon, the Pleiades, the movement of the heavens, Charles's Wain, the Evening Star, sun and moon, the Morning Star, Aries, and night.[18] The only cosmological subject in the *Enigmata* of Tatwine is the sunbeams, but Eusebius, whose sixty riddles complement Tatwine's forty, adds heaven, earth, sun, moon, and day and night.[19]

In the Latin 'sun' riddles, the notion that the subject travels paths unknown to human sight and understanding, as expressed in the concluding lines of Riddle 95, is a recurring motif. In Berne 55, for instance, the speaking sun that invigorates 'many' (*multos*) is said to 'traverse the earth without leaving any traces' (*Vestigia nulla figens perambulo terras*; Strecker 1923: 756). The same idea, together with the paradox of the sun's fugacious yet constant nature, is further elaborated upon in Berne 57, "De sole" ('On the Sun'):

17 Nos. 55 and 57, "De sole"; 58 and 59, "De luna"; 60, "De caelo"; and 62, "De stellis". The *Berne Riddles* are edited in Strecker (1923) and Glorie (1968: 541–610).

18 Nos. 1, "Terra"; 6, "Luna"; 8, "Pliades"; 48, "Vertigo poli"; 53, "Arcturus"; 58, "Vesper sidus"; 79, "Sol et Luna"; 81, "Lucifer"; 86, "Aries"; and 97, "Nox". The standard edition is Ehwald (1919: 97–149), whose text is printed, with additional collations, in Glorie (1968: 359–540).

19 Tatwine, no. 40, "De radiis solis". Eusebius, nos. 5, "De caelo"; 6, "De terra"; 10, "De sole"; 11, "De luna"; and 48, "De die et nocte". Tatwine's and Eusebius' *Enigmata* are edited in Glorie (1968: 165–208 and 209–271).

Prohibeor solus noctis videre tenebras
Et absconse ducor loga per avia fugiens.
Nulla mihi velox avis inventa volatu,
Cum videar nullas gestare corpore pennas.
Vix auferre praedam me coram latro valebit, 5
Publica per diem dum semper competa curro.

(Strecker 1923: 757)

'I alone am forbidden to see the darkness of the night, and I travel secretly, fleeing through distant wastes. No fast-flying bird matches my flight although no wings can be seen on my body. [5] No robber will ever be able to make me his prey while I forever hasten along the cross-roads in broad daylight'.

Like the author of Riddle 95, the Berne poet, too, refers to a plunderer or robber (*latro*, 5), although the meaning here is literal and different from the metaphorical 'plunderers' in the Old English riddle. The point is that, given its enormous size in relation to earth, the sun in its distant sphere moves faster even than a bird, unreachable for humans as it completes its daily course across the firmament. A closer parallel, though, occurs in the opening couplet: on its nightly journey the sun descends into the ocean's 'distant wastes' (*loga [...] avia*, 2), travelling 'secretly' (*absconse*, 2) and unseen, just as the speaker of Riddle 95 'at times conceal[s]' its 'track from all humans' (12b–13).

Aldhelm, who studied astronomy and computus at the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian (Lapidge 1986: 52–53), shared the belief that the sun turns around the earth and disappears under it at night. In his *Enigmata*, Aldhelm refers to the phenomenon both in his acrostic "Preface" and in the riddle about the Evening Star (no. 58, "Vesper Sidus"), which accompanies the setting sun on its dive beneath the waters (58.3–5):

Oceano Titan dum corpus tinxerit almum
Et polus in glaucis relabens volvitur undis,
Tum sequor, in vitreis recondens lumina campis

(Ehwald 1919: 123)

'When Titan [i.e. the sun] dips his life-giving body in the ocean and the sky, sinking downwards, is absorbed in the grey waves, then I follow concealing my light in the glass-green plains (of the sea)' (Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 82).[20]

20 In the acrostic preface to the *Enigmata* (Praefatio, 19–20), Aldhelm refers to the Holy Land as the region 'where the bright sun, on raising its head from the ocean's flood, shines forth' (Ehwald 1919: 98; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 70).

More than the Berne poet, Aldhelm celebrates the divine nature of the sun as part of God's Creation (no. 100, lines 53 and 67). Together, the sun and the moon are the celestial siblings who 'rule the nocturnal hours and the limits of days', preventing the world from falling into chaos (no. 79, "Sol et Luna").[21] Elsewhere in Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, the sun is portrayed as both the friend of humans and the enemy of darkness. In the riddles about the Morning Star (no. 81, "Lucifer") and the cock (no. 26, "Gallus"), the life-giving and ever-revolving sun 'brilliantly illuminates the globe' with its 'majestic light'[22] – much the same as the noble and widely-loved speaker of Exeter Riddle 95 – while in the longer riddle about the night (no. 97, "Nox"), the personified sun appears as simultaneously friendly and antagonistic (lines 7–8):

> Est inimica mihi, quae cunctis constat amica,
> Saecula dum lustrat, lampas Titania Phoebi
>
> (Ehwald 1919: 143)

> 'The Titanian torch of Phoebus [i.e. the sun], who is a friend to all as it proceeds through the world, is inimical to me [i.e. the night]' (Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 92)

The notion that the sun is mankind's welcome 'friend to all' (*cunctis [...] amica*, 7) because it drives away the dark night ties in with what is said in Riddle 95 about the wandering stars that, once grabbed from the moon, become the friends of the sun (lines 3–6). In fact, several of Aldhelm's cosmological *enigmata* mention how the stars and planets move in the heavens, proceeding 'through the sky [...] along an oblique path' to 'ascend the lofty summits of the heavens'.[23] Or they circle around the earth like the stars of the Pleiades, remaining hidden by day (no. 8, "Pliades", lines 3–4):

> Arce poli gradimur nec non sub Tartara terrae;
> Furvis conspicimur tenebris et luce latemus
>
> (Ehwald 1919: 102)

21 Aldhelm, Enigma 79, "Sol et Luna" ('sun and moon'), 8: *Nocturnos regimus cursus et frena dierum* (Ehwald 1919: 134; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 87).

22 Aldhelm, Enigma 81, "Lucifer" ('Morning Star'), 2: *Signifer et Phoebi, lustrat qui limpidus orbem* (Ehwald 1919: 134; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 88); and Enigma 26, "Gallus" ('cock'), 2: *Augustae lucis radios et lumina Phoebi* (Ehwald 1919: 108; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 75).

23 Aldhelm, Enigma 81, "Lucifer", 3: *Per caelum gradiens obliquo tramite flector* (Ehwald 1919: 135; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 88); and Enigma 86, "Aries", 3–4: *Et tamen astrifero procedens agmine stipor, / Culmina caelorum quae scandunt celsa catervis* (Ehwald 1919: 137; Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 89).

'We walk at the summit of the sky and beneath the depths of the earth as well. We are visible in blackest darkness, but are hidden by daylight' (Lapidge and Rosier 1985: 72).

Further parallels to Riddle 95 can be found among the one hundred hexametrical *Enigmata* of Tatwine and Eusebius. The sunbeams are the subject of Tatwine's *enigma* no. 40, "De radiis solis" (which is the title given in both two extant manuscripts), but the single speaker of its five lines is the sun:

Summa poli spatians dum lustro cacumina laetus
Dulcibus allecti dapibus sub culmine curvo
Intus ludentem sub eodem temporis ortu
Cernere me tremulo possunt in culmine caeli.
Corporis absens plausu quid sum pandite sophi! 5
(Glorie 1968: 207)[24]

'As I happily circle across the highest peaks of the heavens, those [who are] elected to a sweet supper beneath a curved roof [i.e. to the Holy Communion in church] can perceive me playing indoors and at the same time in the quivering summit of the sky. Reveal, wise men, what I am, whose body cannot be touched!'

The riddle hinges on the paradox of the seemingly human yet unearthly nature of its subject. Like the speaker of Exeter Riddle 95, Tatwine's sun enjoys the company of earth-dwellers; here, they are represented as a group of Christians gathered for mass, while in the Old English text, they more broadly comprise both 'the mighty and the lowly'(*ricum ond heanum*), with whom the sun 'often rest[s]' (*reste oft*, 95.2a). Yet despite its welcome presence on earth, the anthropomorphized sun is ultimately speech- and bodiless – and hence non-human – remaining unattainable to us as it orbits through the universe. The same themes, the sun's non-human nature and its unstoppable course, reoccur in Eusebius' four-liner "De sole" (no. 10):

Omnis, quaque via pergit, venit ut requiescat.
Non mea sic via, non mihi sedes subditur ulla,
Sed iuge restat iter, quod non finitur in annis;
Non populi et reges cursum prohibere valebunt.
(Glorie 1968: 220)[25]

24 Except 2: *allectis* for *allecti* as in MS *L* (London, British Library, Royal 12.C.xxiii, fol. 127r), which is adopted here. For a recent comment on this riddle, see Lockett (2011: 264–265). My reading of line 2 follows Ebert (1877: 42 n. 4).

25 Except 4: *et* as in *L* (London, British Library, Royal 12.C.xxiii, fol. 114v), where Glorie prints *non*.

> 'Wherever one wanders, one arrives and may rest. Yet my wanderings are different, no seat is offered to me, but my journey lasts forever, endless through the years; people and kings are unable to hinder my course'.

As in all of Eusebius' *Enigmata*, the subject to be guessed is speaking and humanized. It moves, yet its wanderings (*via*, 2) are unlike those of men, who may rest and sit after their journeys. The never-arriving sun, by contrast, unceasingly runs around its sphere, and no one – neither common folk nor powerful rulers – can stop it. With the *populi et reges* ('people and kings') of the concluding verse (4) Eusebius resorts to a stock phrase that is echoed by the *ricum ond heanum* in Riddle 95.2b.[26] Longer and more imposing than any of its Latin analogues, the Old English poem recasts what is succinctly captured in Eusebius' witty tetrastich. Using prosopopoeia, both riddles metaphorically describe the sun's celestial movements and end with a reference to its constant orbit around the earth, which is emphasized as the identifying characteristic that is beyond human grasp and knowledge.

As a riddle subject, the course of the sun is sometimes treated alongside that of the moon, as in Aldhelm's "Sol et Luna" (no. 79) and in Exeter Riddle 29. In the Berne collection, the two 'sun' riddles (nos. 55 and 57) are complemented by two items about the moon (nos. 58 and 59). Both mention the many 'paths' (*vias*) of the lunar traveller in their opening lines, yet the central clues which distinguish the moon from the sun concern the former's waxing and waning (no. 58) and its disappearance by day (no. 59).[27] Its alternating cycle is doubtlessly the moon's most discriminating feature, and as such it occurs in Aldhelm's "Luna" (no. 6) – together with the moon's effect on the ocean tides – as well as in Eusebius' "De luna" (no. 11), which compares the sun's effortless journey with the arduous wanderings of the ever-changing moon. Elsewhere in the early medieval riddle tradition, the sun and the moon are typically portrayed as an unequal pair. In the Latin *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*, a fictitious conversation between Emperor Hadrian and the philosopher Epictetus, for instance, the sun stands for the 'brilliance of the day and the life of everything', while the nocturnal moon is seen more negatively as a teacher of evil and a shelter for wrongdoers.[28] None of these themes occur in Exeter Riddle 95, which rules out 'moon' as an

26 The pairing of *rice ond heane* also occurs in the 'wheel' Riddle 32.13 (Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 197) and elsewhere in both poetry and prose; see Stanley (1995: 201).

27 Berne 58.1: *Assiduo multas vias itinere currens*, and 59.1–3: *quo movear gressum, nullus cognoscere temptat […]. Cottidie currens vias perambulo multas* (Strecker 1923: 757).

28 *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi*, version AE_1a, 9–10 (Suchier 1955: 12).

alternative solution. Instead, the characteristics of the enigmatic subject listed in the Old English poem accord with those of the sun in the Latin riddles. They concern – according to the traditional view of the cosmos – the sun's prominence among the heavenly bodies and its benevolence towards mankind, its rivalry with the moon as ruler of the firmament, its non-human nature and its perpetual course and unseen wanderings at night.

9 Conclusion

Although its thirteen lines of alliterative verse survive complete, the text of Riddle 95 contains some scribal erros that necessitate editorial emendation. Its place as the final item of the Exeter Book in its extant form has prompted a number of misguided and romantic interpretations, including the erroneous view that the riddle was written as a sort of metapoetic coda rounding off the collection. This long-standing myth, first advanced more than 150 years ago and still perpetuated by some commentators, is behind the most widely accepted solution 'book'.

However, none of the various and conflicting answers to Riddle 95 proposed so far accounts for all the details mentioned in the text. Tupper's 'moon' comes closest, yet the riddle's noble and omnipresent subject that proudly and speechlessly reigns in the strongholds of the heavens but whose track we are unable to fully follow must be the sun. As such, the riddle complements the group of cosmological poems in the Exeter Book, especially the closely related Riddle 29 ('moon and sun') and other 'sun' Riddle 6, as well as the longer *The Order of the World* and *The Phoenix* with their resonant descriptions of the sun's orbit around the earth. Of these, Riddle 29 can in many ways be seen as a companion piece to Riddle 95; both poems not only present their subject as being 'familiar' to everybody, but they also share the distinctive image of the stars as a heavenly 'plunder', allude to the firmament as a contested 'stronghold', and include a reference to the sun's path across the sky.

Just as the animal riddles in the Exeter Book draw upon knowledge gleaned from natural history and the Latin *enigmata*, Riddle 95 is informed both by what Anglo-Saxons believed about the nature of the universe and by the early medieval riddle tradition. Its text reflects theories about the geocentric cosmos and the solar course promulgated by such authoritative writers as Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede, whose astronomical and computistic treatises circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. These theories include the sun's overpowering effect on the other spherical stars and its nightly wanderings under the earth, both of which become central clues in the Exeter riddle. Not surprisingly, the same themes also occur among the earlier Latin *enigmata*, which regularly include astronomy and

cosmology among their topics. The 'sun' riddles in the anonymous seventh-century *Berne* collection and the cosmological riddles of the Anglo-Saxons Aldhelm, Tatwine and Eusebius, in particular, have several striking parallels with our poem. Together, they corroborate the rich internal and external evidence suggesting that 'sun', the celebrated day-candle of Old English poetry, is the solution to Exeter Book Riddle 95.

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